

# Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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## Abortionists to press new President

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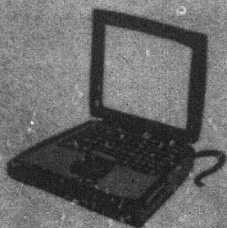
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# The pale blue dot

As another troubling year passes into history, we face a new year that promises to be even more troubling than the last. At least, that's what all the news people and other self-appointed prognosticators are warning — and they're not completely wrong. The year 2009 could very well be a tough one for many of us.

Few people have been untouched by the current economic misery. If it hasn't affected us personally, we certainly know of friends or relatives who have lost their jobs, their life savings, or both. Before 2009 is finished, all of us will likely have been personally affected in some important way by the economic crisis we are facing.

Meanwhile, the people we have elected to lead us are too often under indictment or being convicted for betraying our trust while attempting to enrich themselves. Sadly, such behavior is not isolated to politicians. Too many of our business, civic, sports, and spiritual leaders are failing us, too.

We have been told that our enemies are planning to test the mettle of our new President, who is scheduled to be sworn in to office in just a few days. When and from what direction such an attack (or attacks) would occur are not known, and it's not just our enemies from without who seek to do us harm. We have enemies within, too.

Radical and unpredictable regimes either possess or seek to possess nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, as well as the missiles to deliver their deadly payloads anywhere on earth. More stable countries in turn seek the means to defend themselves,

and the most dangerous arms race in human history picks up momentum.

Meanwhile, the evil one continues to sow confusion and destruction wherever he can, probing at our spiritual boundaries in search of weak spots — and rest assured he will find them.

What kind of world are we leaving behind for our children?

Perhaps it's time for Christians to pause, at the beginning of this new year, to once again ponder the greatness of our God, the smallness of our own being, and acknowledge His authority over all creation.

The late astronomer and scientist Carl Sagan was the first to suggest to NASA that the Voyager 1 spacecraft, nearing the end of its mission in 1990 and on the verge of exiting the solar system, turn its camera back toward earth. The result was a phenomenal view of our planet from the heliosheath, an area where the solar system ends and interstellar space begins, four billion miles from earth.

When the photograph, which took 14 hours to reach earth at the speed of light, was released by NASA's Visible Earth program, observers marveled at the smallness of the earth against the vastness of space. We are, after all, merely a pale blue dot, as Sagan coined the photograph, and without our God, that is all we would ever be.

Thanks to Him, however, every hair on every head is numbered and known to Him. He who spoke the universe into existence is still on His throne, and He cares for each of one of us. He set the pale blue dot in place, and continues to watch over it.

Without Him, we are nothing. With Him, anything is possible (Matt. 19:26). What a great truth to take with us into the new year!



**PALE BLUE DOT** — The planet earth, set against the vastness of space in this NASA Visible Earth image, was photographed in 1990 by Voyager 1 as the spacecraft passed through the heliosheath, an area beyond the planets where the solar system ends and interstellar space begins. The photograph was taken at a distance of four billion miles, making it the most distant view of earth ever recorded. (NASA photo)

**CHARLESTON, S.C. (BP)** — I recently returned from my state Baptist convention. This meeting served as a painful reminder of the generation gap that exists in our convention at both the state and national level.

As I surveyed the attendees, I was reminded of something I see every year at the national convention. The average age of those in attendance was probably in the 60s. There were very few young faces in the crowd. I saw some in their 30s and 40s but not many and virtually none in their 20s.

Our annual gatherings have become age-graded, and we're failing the test.

Many reasons can be suggested for this generation gap. One might argue that younger ministers and laypeople just can't find the time to go to a convention in the middle of the busy week. That might account for some of the absenteeism.

Others might contend that the younger generation finds the conventions distracting, too political, or of little practical value. They'd rather go knock on doors, work on sermons, or have teeth pulled. That's possible, too, but I think the problem is more age-related than that.

## GUEST OPINION:



### Our young leaders

By Peter Beck  
Charleston, S.C.

The problem is, as former LifeWay Christian Resources president Jimmy Draper diagnosed several years ago, there are very few young leaders. Sure, there are young men and women serving in their local ministry or churches, but few show up on the convention platform at the state level and even fewer at the national convention.

The generation gap is glaring at the leadership level and I'm afraid it doesn't bode well for our denominational future. Admittedly, the young adults in our convention bear some of the blame. Some have acted immaturely and walked away in impatience and anger. Some struggle with the

twin sins of individuality and pride, insisting on proceeding alone. Still others have failed to earn the respect they so vociferously demand.

For these things and a myriad of others, some must repent. They must return to the Baptist table seeking forgiveness before inclusion.

Yet, the younger generation cannot and does not bear the burden alone. One cannot declare himself a denominational leader. He must be placed into a position of leadership by someone else. At this point, I'm afraid, we fail these faithful Baptists.

In defense of the older generation who has served our denomination faithfully for so

long, they are understandably reluctant to surrender the care of the denomination to others for good reason. Some have sacrificed their reputation, their livelihood, their own well-being for the good of the convention. For that, we must be ever grateful and of that we must be ever cognizant.

If we want to inject theologically sound and practical liveliness back into our meetings and our Convention, we must embrace the next generation of leaders. We need to identify and enlist (not reward) the up-and-coming leaders who will lead our denomination for the next 30 or 40 years. We need to do so now while the giants of our recent past still walk the earth and can mentor their replacements. We must remember that the future of the Southern Baptist Convention is not in the past.

Let's close the generation gap now while we still can and walk hand-in-hand into the future.

Beck serves as an assistant professor of religion at Charleston Southern University, which is affiliated with the South Carolina Baptist Convention, in Charleston, S.C.



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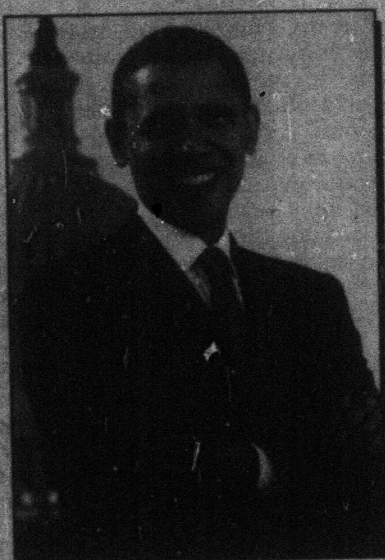
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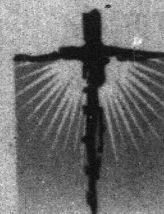
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GHE IVXN PZHHLW FH  
BGYBI YSEW TNBLH,  
PHBPVCHO YSEW PBGE,  
EWBE IH DBI MCVY WVV  
IH VXTWE EV BCPYHN  
HKHNI DBC.

LVGVPSPBCP RVXN:PSJ

Clue: G = L

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error.

## GET IN GEAR

With the year of 2008 quickly fading into the distance and 2009 sitting right on our plate, it is a good time to stop, evaluate, recoup, and attempt to focus on what we can do and some things that we must do. The year 2008 was, and the year 2009 will be, a time of change. Although our soon-to-be-inaugurated president ran on change, the fact is change describes the world in which we live. We are constantly in the throes of change and the real question is, how do we manage change? How do we avoid being crushed by change? What are the points of change that we can actually take hold of and make a difference?

With the New Year always comes resolutions about what we can do or ought to do. The perpetual trinity of New Year's resolutions seems to always include weight loss, debt management, and maybe stop smoking. Taking a word from the heart of the great Apostle Paul, let me encourage you to press on for as he stated it, "I press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). What is it that we can do for Jesus and with Jesus in 2009 that will make a difference in Kingdom work?

Recently, I was sitting at a stop sign in a long line of cars. It was not a light but just a stop sign. We were all waiting to turn either to the right or the left and get on with our journey. I was probably about the tenth car back from the front. There were probably twice that many cars behind me. Obviously, something did not seem to be right. I noticed cars pulling out to the right side of the front vehicle, go around it on the shoulder, and make their way back on to the road. As I inched along and got closer up to the front, I still was not sure what the problem was but I could see what they were trying to bypass. The front vehicle was an 18-wheeler-plus. I did not stop and count all of the wheels but it was one of



## Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

those huge, heavy equipment haulers. I wondered at first if maybe because it was so large it was unable to get out from the stop sign on to the next road but then eventually when I did what everybody else was doing and pulled around the vehicle I discovered the problem. The driver and a couple of folks assisting him could not get the big rig in gear. The engine was working fine. They had gotten that far into the day pulling their weight and the weight of the machine on top. Now they were stuck in that spot because they could not get the big rig in gear.

Time and space will not allow me to venture off into a number of areas about churches, institutions, or organizations, but as big and strong as they may be, sometimes they cannot get in gear. With all of their power and strength, they sit and go nowhere. So let me turn my attention to something that may be more practical as I realize that the one thing we can do as individuals is to take some steps to get in gear. No one may call from Wall Street and ask your opinion and the people who fill the halls of Congress may never ask your advice, but there are things that you and I can do that will make a difference in us and impact the world around us. I encourage you and me to look at 2009 and do what we need to do to get in gear.

Let me begin by suggesting that we get in gear in worship. While I believe so very strongly in public, corporate worship, it is interesting to see in Scripture that much of worship is personal and maybe even private. It is out of our walk with the Lord behind the scenes, out on the

backside of life, maybe by a burning bush, that the great experiences of life take shape. You may not be in charge of public worship but what you do or do not do in your personal, private devotion is a completely get-in-gear decision on your part. How much time you spend in the Word of God, not just rushing through it, but also pausing to meditate on it to stop and look at the great truths that may surround you? Standing in awe of the magnificent panorama of the presence of God that seems to fill the space of your life is up to you. Maybe in your private worship time, there is music involved. You sing to the Lord. Well, I want you to understand that you do not have to worry about whether it fits someone's artistic taste buds or not because you are the one who is in charge. If you love hymns, get with it. If God has placed some special new and fresh chorus on your heart, express it. If you want to make up your own tunes of glory to the Lord, have at it. Carve out a personal worship time for yourself to get with God for it will make a difference in your life. Get in gear!

Second, let me suggest that you get in gear when it comes to your witness. Do you realize that nobody can tell your story, like you? You may not get on a large platform and speak to thousands, but you will have opportunities one after another to tell the wonder of Jesus at work in your heart if you will just watch for them. How many times in the 365 days of 2008 did you encounter someone that you could have taken a moment or just two or three minutes and told him or her about what the Lord means to you and what He could mean

to them? Acts 1:8 says, "But ye shall be my witnesses." It is not optional. It is an absolute wonderful spiritual obligation that we tell folks what Jesus means to us, how He came into our lives, how He sustains us in the difficult times, and celebrates with us in the good times. It may be that there were long stretches of emptiness in 2008 when you did not share your testimony, your witness with anyone. Find a time, place, and space at the very beginning of 2009 and get your witness in gear. There are souls to be reached, lives to be changed, and blessings to be enjoyed because you speak a word for our living Savior.

One final and quick thought about getting in gear is related to work. In John 9:4 Jesus said, "The night cometh when no man can work." He is telling His disciples that He must be busy working because in reality we all live in a capsule of time while we are on this earth. There are opportunities that come that cannot be recaptured. There is work to be done which left undone may never be done. A quick glance over your shoulder may reveal that in 2008 there were some things that you felt unusually impressed of the Lord to do, to act, to work, and you did not do them. Maybe God in His goodness and grace will give you another opportunity. I would encourage you even this very moment to put in place a plan to get done what God has given you the opportunity to do. There may be work that needs to be done at your church and maybe with your family. Today is a good day to get in gear and to get it done. May the Lord bless you and give you a glorious 2009.

The author can be contacted at [jfutral@mbcb.org](mailto:jfutral@mbcb.org).

## MISSISSIPPI

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# Religious freedom panel: Iraq among worst violators

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — A bipartisan U.S. panel has recommended Iraq be returned to a list of the world's worst violators of religious liberty for the first time since an American-led invasion liberated the Middle East country from Saddam Hussein's rule in 2003.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) announced Dec. 16 its recommendation that the State Department should designate Iraq as one of its "countries of particular concern" (CPC), a category reserved for governments that have "engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom."

Iraq should receive such a designation based on the "ongoing, severe abuses of religious freedom and the Iraqi government's toleration of these abuses, particularly abuses against Iraq's smallest, most vulnerable religious minorities," USCIRF Chair Felice Gaer told reporters at a Capitol Hill news conference. "The lack of effective government action to protect these communities from abuses has established Iraq among the most dangerous places on earth for religious minorities."

The lack of protection for these minorities, which include Chaldo-Assyrian and other Christians, Sabeen Mandaean, and Yazidis, has resulted in many of their members fleeing to other parts of Iraq or into neighboring countries. In addition, problems remain between the Shi'a and Sunni Muslim sects in Iraq, according to USCIRF.

The decision to recommend Iraq as a CPC was the next step in a progression for the commission. In 2003, the State Department redesignated Iraq as a CPC barely two weeks before the U.S.-led offensive began. By the next year, USCIRF declined to recommend Iraq as a CPC and the U.S. State Department obliged by dropping the country from the list.

In 2006, the commission expressed concern about religious liberty conditions in Iraq but refused to recommend it as a CPC or for addition to the "watch list," which is reserved for regimes the

panel does not believe should be designated as CPCs but require close monitoring.

USCIRF, however, added Iraq to the "watch list" in 2007 and warned it might recommend it as a CPC the next year.

Only five members of the nine-member USCIRF voted to recommend Iraq as a CPC, the commission said in its latest report. The other four commissioners, including Richard Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, voted against CPC designation in the belief that Iraq's failures do not meet the standards required for CPC designation.

Among other reasons it gave, the minority contended the Iraqi government has a "serious lack of capacity" to deal with terrorist and insurgent actions against religious minorities, according to the USCIRF report.

The minority agreed, however, the Iraqi government has not done what is required to combat the problem. The four commissioners also approved of the policy recommendations made by the entire panel.

"[T]here's no disagreement on this commission when it comes to the serious plight of religious minorities and the fact that they are being abused," Land told reporters. "There's no disagreement about what we think needs to be done. The only disagreement here was on whether the Iraqi government's failure to address this adequately is a product of will or a product of lack of capacity to do so."

Urging Washington to keep religious freedom high on its agenda in Iraq, the commission included these among numerous, unanimous recommendations to the U.S. government:

- Call for the Iraqi government to build representative police units to protect religious minorities.
- Take the lead in providing security for just provincial elections in January.
- Encourage Baghdad to approve constitutional amendments that will promote human rights, including the removal of a section that says a law may not contradict "the established provisions of Islam."



**SAD DUTY** — An Iraqi fireman searches for human remains at the Buratha Shiite mosque in Baghdad following an April 2006 triple-homicide bombing that killed 85 people and wounded 160. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has characterized the war-torn Middle East country as one of the world's worst violators of religious freedom. (BP photo by Wathiq Khuzaie/Getty Images)

- Designate and send quickly to Baghdad a special envoy for human rights.

Congressman Frank Wolf (R-Va.) spoke at the news conference and was particularly distressed at the Bush administration's failure to press Iraq for religious freedom for its citizens while

American troops are risking their lives. He said he believes Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice "has failed."

Religious minorities are in danger of extinction in Iraq, USCIRF said. The Christian population of the country has fallen from as many as 1.4 million Christians in 2003 to a total of 500,000-700,000. Nearly 90% of Sabeen Mandaean have either left the country or been killed in that time period. In addition to Yazidis, other minorities that have been repressed are Baha'is and Jews.

Sabeen Mandaean follow the teachings of John the Baptist, while Yazidi rituals include worship of a fallen angel who repented.

The USCIRF report on Iraq is available at the commission's website, [www.uscifr.gov](http://www.uscifr.gov).

Under the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act, the commission makes CPC recommendations to the State Department, which makes CPC designations. The State Department has not issued a CPC list in more than two years.

USCIRF advises the White House and Congress on religious liberty conditions overseas. The president selects three members of the panel, while congressional leaders name the other six. The State Department's ambassador at large for international religious freedom serves as a non-voting member of the panel.

## Orissa Christians receive Southern Baptist aid

BHUBANESWAR, India (BP) — About 2,100 Christian families driven from their homes by Hindus in India's Orissa state are receiving badly needed relief supplies from Southern Baptists' world hunger and general relief funds.

Tens of thousands of Christians have been forced from their homes since a Hindu swami and four of his followers were murdered in late August. Though Maoist insurgents took credit for the killing, Hindu extremists blamed Christians and mounted mob attacks on churches, as well as homes and villages populated by Christians. Dozens of people have been killed, hundreds injured, and thousands of homes, churches, and businesses have been burned.

Four men, one of them "a hardcore Maoist," were arrested for the swami's murder in early December, according to reports.

The Christians receiving the aid have fled to camps operated by the government, police officials, and private groups. Even in the camps, they have found themselves subject to extremist attacks. More than \$38,000 has been released from the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund and general relief funds to distribute a month's worth of basic food items to 2,135 families, representing a total of about 12,810 people, said Francis Horton, who with his wife Angie directs work in Central and South Asia for

Baptist Global Response, an international relief and development organization that is coordinating the effort.

The director of the Orissa project, whose name is being withheld for security reasons, said the effort seeks "to bring some relief to Christians who have suffered loss at the hands of persecutors in the state of Orissa."

"These brothers and sisters have nowhere to go. Many are afraid to go back to their homes. At present they are unable to go home unless they convert to Hinduism."

The project, which is being implemented in partnership with Baptists in India, will purchase and distribute lentils and rice to families in three districts of Orissa, Horton said. Blankets also will be supplied as needed to the families.

The partnership with Indian believers is essential to this project because the presence of outsiders could reinforce the perception among Hindus that foreign Christians are exercising inappropriate influence over local people, Horton explained.

Accusations that foreign missionaries manipulate locals into converting from Hinduism have helped drive the mob violence, according to news reports. Without the assistance of national partners, getting relief supplies to the camps might not be possible, Horton said.



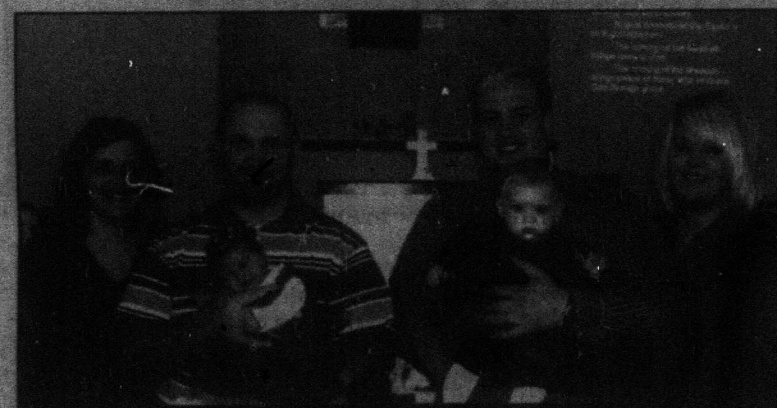
## JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Webb Church



2. Smith and Horne



3. Baby dedication, New Home Church



4. Gerald and Risher



1. Webb Church, Webb, recently ordained Haywood Wilson as deacon. Shown are pastor Mark Morgan, Wilson, wife Connie, and daughter Cassie.

2. Williamsville Church, Kosciusko, recently honored Joy Horne for her years of service in the church nursery. Shown are Cindy Smith, left, and Horne.

3. New Home Church, Fulton, held a baby dedication Dec. 21. Shown, from left, are Penni and Jimmy Dale Sartin with Lexi Beth; and Kevin and Jill Kinney with Lily Bess.

4. Stronghope Church, Wesson, ordained Heath Gerald to the gospel ministry Nov. 30. Shown are Ferguson and Robin Risher.

5. The mission friends and children's missions of Concord Church, Booneville, participated in the Christmas in August mission project, collecting school supplies for missionary Michael Daily of the Miami, Fla., Baptist Association. Shown are the participants.

6. The Team Kids and Team Youth of New Montpelier Church, Woodland, entertained at the Christmas party of Babcock and Wilcox, a local industry in West Point. Shown are the participants.



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### COLLEGE NEWS

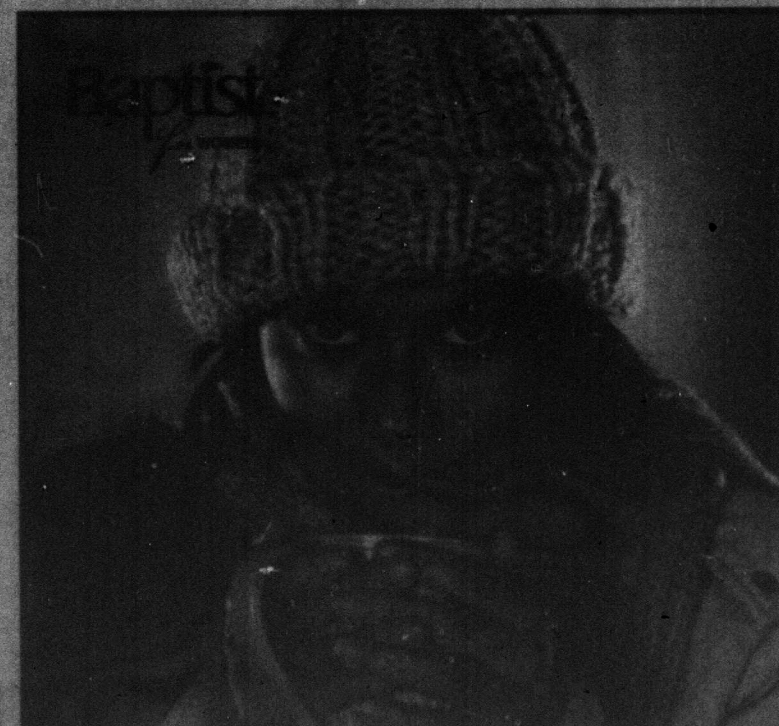
1. William Carey University has earned a Level 5 status, up from its previous Level 4, granted by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. This distinction means that WCU can now grant doctoral degrees.



5. Children, Concord Church, Booneville



6. Team Kids and Team Youth, New Montpelier Church



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## BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

### Gain Fresh Perspective

Psalm 19:1-14

By Bill Patterson

Do you make New Year's resolutions? I take time each week to review the days of that week, each month to evaluate the weeks of that month, and each year to appraise the months of that year. Then I set goals for the upcoming year. Some folks would find that procedure stifling, but it helps me stay on task rather than be mastered by the shifting sands of emotion or the changing tides of daily circumstances.

As much help as I find from reflection and goal-setting, there is something that changes me much more—the Holy Spirit speaking to my heart. What about you? Does the Spirit work through Scripture, circumstances, conviction, and an inner voice to transform and motivate

you? Psalm 19 gives us a framework for a fresh perspective.

#### Look at the Sky (Psalm 19:1-6)

Think of the last, beautiful sunset you saw. God paints the sky just so we can enjoy it and reflect on Him. Who can deny that both the orderliness and the beauty of creation reflect His glory?

God's witness in nature is continuous. Verse 2 points to the sun and the stars with the words, "day by day" and "night by night" (NASB). God's witness in nature is abundant as it "pours forth speech" (v. 2, NASB). God's witness in nature is universal. Verse 3 indicates the message of His glory is revealed in nature through sight rather than sound.

General revelation tells us much about our creator. Many



Patterson

scientists have become Christians as a result of their investigations. With ultra-powerful microscopes they have found that the atom with its sub-atomic particles is ordered to an extent that could never happen by chance.

Likewise, super telescopes have revealed the universe as a whole is ordered in a way unachievable by mere accident.

Although we can learn from nature, we are not to worship the creation instead of the Creator. We are not satisfied completely on earth because we were not made for earth. God made us to worship and enjoy Him forever.

#### Look in the Scriptures (Psalm 19:7-11)

It is not enough to know God only as Creator. We must know Him as Savior. That is why King David abruptly changed the subject from general revelation in nature to special revelation in Scripture. He called God by his name, "El," in verse 1 but by His

highest and holiest name, "Yahweh," beginning in verse 7.

The Bible is flawless. We can trust it (vs. 7a, 9b). The Bible is desirable. Its taste is sweeter than honey (v. 10). Can you count the times God has restored your soul and added joy to your life as you poured over His Word? (vs. 7a, 8a). The Bible is instructive. You can find God's wisdom in its pages (vs. 7b, 8b).

A poet said it this way:

"Lord, take me back  
To the old landmark,  
Where I made a new commitment  
And began a fresh start."  
Help me find my direction,  
Place a burden on my heart.  
Lord, take me back  
To the old landmark."

That old landmark is the Word of God. In it we gain God's fresh perspective.

#### Look in Your heart (Psalm 19:12-14)

David mentions himself in verse 11. He discovered the dual purpose of the law, to reveal sin and to promote holiness. That led him to pray for cleansing from hidden faults (verse 12) which he had committed and

also from willful sins (verse 13).

Psalm 19 ends with a verse every Christian should memorize. David taught us to pray that our words and our meditations would be acceptable in God's sight.

While at first glance it may not seem that Psalm 19 is related to gaining perspective for a new start, it truly does. God's revelation in nature, in Scripture, and in our hearts provides the framework and impetus for a new beginning.

The magi of Matthew 2 are wonderful examples of this lesson. They searched for Jesus because they had seen a star that indicated He had been born. However, when they arrived in Israel, they had to ask His exact location. The priests found the answer in the Scriptures (Micah 5:2). Creation can lead us to conclude that God is; however, only Scripture can lead us to Him. The light of nature led the magi to the light of the Word which led them to the Light of the World.

Patterson is pastor of First Church, Richland.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### What is Your Goal in Life?

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

By Joyce C. Rogers

This lesson challenges us to live up to Christ's standard of behavior. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians to remind them that their new life in Christ demanded new attitudes, particularly regarding immorality. The society in which they lived not only worshiped idols, but prostitution was accepted and legal.

#### Principles to Follow

Life can be thought of as a journey. Paul had instructed the new believers how they must walk to please God. He urged them to continue what they were doing and to strive toward pleasing God more and more.

Becoming a Christian meant radical changes for the Thessalonians. Paul wanted to encourage them.

In another of Paul's letters, Colossians, (chapter 1), he listed goals of the Christian life.

Thy were to (1) live a life worthy of the Lord, (2) to please Him in every way, (3) to bear fruit in every good work, (4) to grow in the knowledge of God, (5) to have great endurance and patience, (6) and to joyfully give thanks to the Father. These are lofty goals indeed, but with the help of the Holy Spirit, why not strive for the highest?

#### Purity to Practice

Believers are sanctified, made holy, set apart by God when they are saved. Believers are not perfect and will not become perfect, but we have that standing with God (justification) because of Jesus' sacrifice and grace.

We are to possess our own "vessel in sanctification and honor" (1 Thess. 4:4 HCSB). "Vessel" may refer to the physical body or, some say, "vessel" refers to a wife. Both applications are true. Our



Rogers

bodies are "a temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19 NIV). The husband-wife relationship is also to be respected, "honorable in all" (Hebrews 13:4 KJV). Those who reject this teaching should know that it comes from God, not man.

Believers are to check and subdue any evil habits they may have had before they became believers. At the same time they are to cultivate positive principles of holiness. It is not enough to abstain from wrong, but also to do right. As the saying goes,

"A person may be good, but good for what?"

Pagan religions regarded sexual freedom and promiscuous practices as normal and natural. Today's society is really pushing to make any kind of sexual behavior acceptable. Their twist is that those who don't accept that view are "haters."

#### Love to Exhibit

Paul said that the Thessalonians had been "taught by God to love one

another" (1 Thess. 4:9b HCSB). These new believers were doing well in this area and were to be complimented and encouraged. The news of the gospel and the faith of the Thessalonians had spread. Their brotherly love reached out to "all the brothers in the entire region of Macedonia" (1 Thess. 4:10b HCSB). In those days of persecution, love for the brothers would stand out in sharp contrast. How affirming these expressions must have been.

God has many ways to teach man. God created man with a conscience. God also makes Himself known through nature, His creation (see Romans 1:20 HCSB).

I wonder how this brotherly love was expressed. Was it through hospitality to visitors, letters of encouragement, or maybe offerings for the poor?

#### Lifestyle to Have

The lifestyle qualities listed in verses 10-12 of our passage provide us with another model. We are to "lead a quiet life, to mind our own business, to work with our own hands."

Believers should not be

busybodies, interfering in others' affairs, or lazy. Sinful living will have its consequences.

Respect in the community is important. Outsiders should be able to see these good qualities exhibited. Then the outsiders can see something different and desirable in the believers. Their Christian witness is enhanced before they say a word.

Paul set the example in all these qualities, especially in working with his hands. He was determined not to be a burden to anyone. Believers do well to work to take care of their own needs, as well as the needs of their families. It is a blessing to be able to give to the poor and to support worthwhile causes.

We please God when we are honest, hard working and loving, especially to our fellow believers. Sexual immorality should not even be an issue among Christians.

How would each of us evaluate our lives by these standards? What is your goal in life?

Rogers is a member of Main Street Church, Hattiesburg.

## Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

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Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if

submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape-, building-, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.



# LifeWay Research's pastor census reveals CP attitudes

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — The large majority of Southern Baptist pastors believe strongly in the Cooperative Program (CP), the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) unified approach to missions support, because it allows congregations to accomplish more together than they could achieve by themselves.

New data from LifeWay Research indicates that one in four pastors see room for improvement in how CP dollars are allocated and how efficiently they are being used.

A census of all Southern Baptist congregations, conducted by LifeWay Research between November 2007 and February 2008 on behalf of the SBC's Executive Committee, revealed that 87% of pastors generally are satisfied with the Cooperative

Program compared to 13% who generally are dissatisfied.

One out of three pastors strongly agreed that state conventions and SBC entities supported by the CP use the contributions efficiently.

"The Executive Committee initiated the survey of all Southern Baptist churches to collect data that would provide an empirical baseline of our churches' thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about the Cooperative Program and stewardship, and to give us insights for developing a more focused strategy in the promotion of the Cooperative Program and stewardship across the convention," said Bob Rodgers, the Executive Committee's vice president for Cooperative Program and stewardship.

Pastors also selected one of six descriptions that best fit their view of the Cooperative Program. The description chosen by the most pastors (44%) was "mostly positive" stating, "We believe the CP perhaps could be improved in some ways, but is doing a very good job at present of supporting worldwide missions."

The second largest group of pastors (36%) described the Cooperative Program as "overwhelmingly positive," stating, "We believe the CP is not only satisfactory, but is essential to the continued existence of the SBC, and the fulfillment of its mission of worldwide evangelism."

Thirteen percent of pastors had a "mixed" view, agreeing that the CP "could be improved in many ways." The remaining responses were spread across "mostly negative" (two percent) and "overwhelmingly negative" (one percent). Three percent of pastors described their church as "unaware" of the Cooperative Program.

Pastors felt strongly that the most important objectives of the Cooperative Program are to send and support missionaries (83%) and to provide resources to plant churches (74%) in North America and around the world.

More than half strongly agreed it is important for the CP to educate and equip pastors, missionaries and ministry leaders; to address social, moral and ethical concerns; and to support state convention missions and ministries.

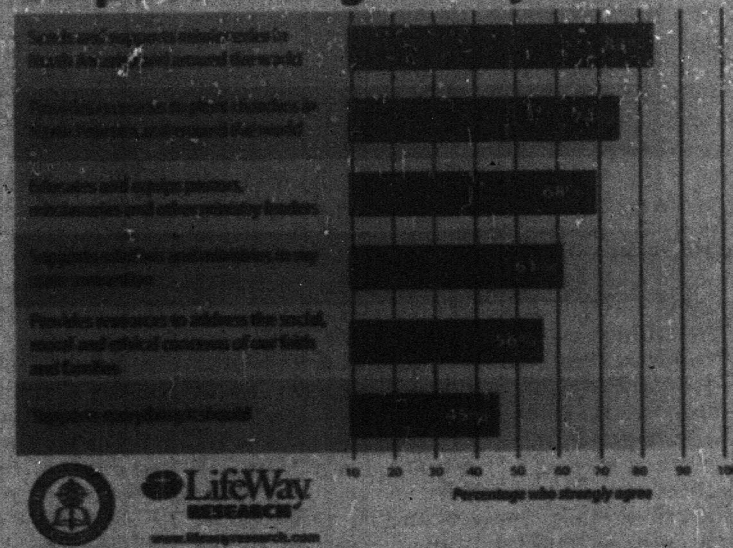
"Clearly, pastors believe the Cooperative Program is valuable for more than two reasons, but supporting missionaries and church planting are the most widely affirmed as essential," said Ed Stetzer, director of LifeWay Research. "Since many churches equate 'missions' with the Cooperative Program, we should not be surprised that 'missions' are at the top of the agenda for pastors."

Pastors indicated that the most important benefit of the Cooperative Program is that it "allows my church to support more missions endeavors efficiently than we could on our own." Seventy-six percent of pastors strongly agreed that this is an important benefit and a nearly identical 74 % strongly agreed that this currently describes the CP.

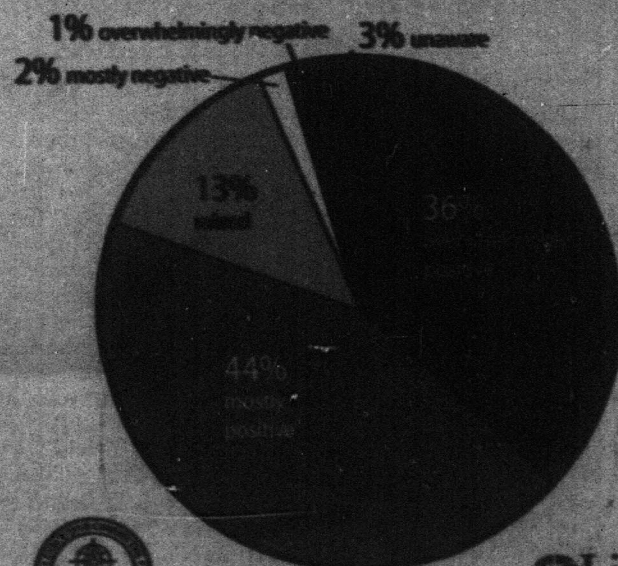
In sharp contrast to the strong overall view of the CP and agreement upon its objectives were pastors' assessment of how efficiently contributions are used. While 65 % of pastors strongly agreed it is important for SBC entities supported by the Cooperative Program to use the contributions efficiently, only half that number (34%) strongly agree efficiency is present today.

Similarly, 63 % of pastors strongly agreed that efficient

## Among SBC pastors Importance of Cooperative Program Objectives



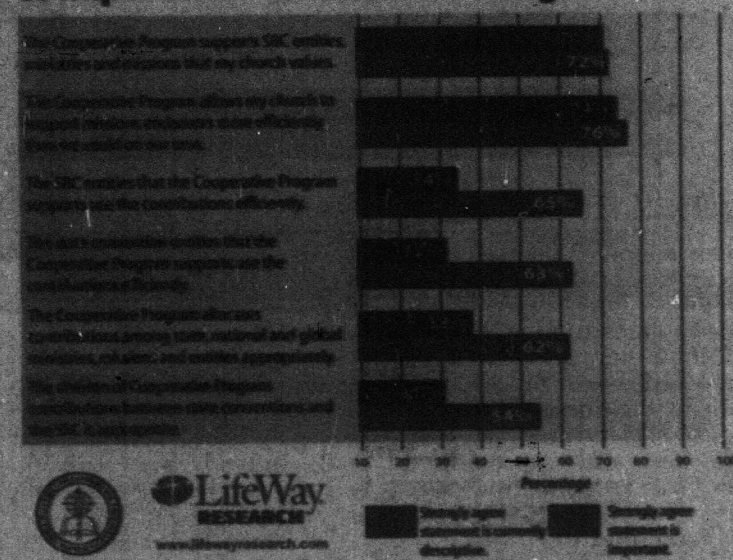
## Among SBC pastors Description of the Cooperative Program that best reflects view of churches



## Among SBC pastors General opinion of the Cooperative Program



## Among SBC pastors Pastors' level of agreement and perception of importance with the following:



use of funds by state convention entities is important but only 32% strongly agreed this is the case today.

Although the vast majority have a positive view of the Cooperative Program and a majority believe the funds are used efficiently, it is important to note that there is a noticeable drop between those who 'strongly agree' that it is important the Cooperative Program be efficient and those who 'strongly agree' it actually is efficient," Stetzer explained.

Views of the current allocation of funds also fell short of the importance pastors place on it. Fifty-four percent of pastors strongly agreed the appropriate division of Cooperative Program funds between state conventions and the SBC is important. Thirty-one percent of pastors strongly agreed funds are divided appropriately between state conventions and the SBC.

A larger majority of pastors (62%) strongly agreed that it is

important for the Cooperative Program to allocate contributions appropriately among state, national, and global ministries, missions, and entities. Only 38 % strongly agreed the current allocation is appropriate among state, national, and global ministries, missions, and entities.

Despite indicating room for improvement in efficiency and exact allocations, more than two-thirds of pastors strongly agreed that the CP currently "supports SBC entities, ministries, and missions that my church values."

Two-thirds of the pastors surveyed said they have promoted the Cooperative Program in their churches during the past year. Other frequent activities to emphasize missions giving include budgeting a percentage of offerings for missions (62%); promoting once-a-year offerings for SBC entities (73%); and providing offering envelopes that allow designated giving for missions (67%).